corporate accountability
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spotlight

2024 **Issue 2**

In Boston, Corporate Accountability staff, members, and volunteers rally outside of Veolia's North American headquarters. Photo credit: Binita Mandalia

A decade of demands

Mobilizing in solidarity for justice in Flint

"Every step we take together strengthens the movement for water justice everywhere."

NISMA GABOBE | SENIOR RESEARCHER

Learn more!

Photos and updates from the Flint day of action: CorporateAccountability.org/FlintSolidarity

Support this work: CorporateAccountability.org/Spotlight

Ten years ago, the people of Flint, Michigan, woke up to contaminated water flowing from their faucets.

That's 10 years of residents being exposed to polluted and poisoned water. Of being forced to use bottled water to drink, cook, and clean. Of dealing with medical problems and long-term chronic health effects. And of demanding a just resolution to a crisis they did nothing to cause.

But while those who played a role still haven't been held accountable, we've never looked away from Flint. So on April 25, the anniversary of the start of the ongoing Flint water crisis, we joined our allies at Flint Rising and other water justice organizations to demand justice and accountability for the people of Flint.

Together, we put a spotlight on Veolia's role in the Flint crisis and the extent of its abuses in different cities across the U.S. And from Boston to Pittsburgh to New Orleans, people across the country called on Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel to hold accountable all those who played a role in this ongoing crisis, and flooded the phone lines and inboxes of Veolia executives.

The crisis in Flint starkly demonstrates how corporate abuse, systemic racism, and antidemocratic action are severe threats to our most basic human rights. But together, we are building power to hold government officials and corporations accountable for their abuses and make them pay for their harm.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Our shared vision and commitment will sustain us

Dear friend,

It's bittersweet to be writing this letter. As you may know, I'll be transitioning out of the role of executive director at the end of this year. I'm moving into a new role where I'll be closer to our campaigns and fundraising (my true passions!).

While I'm looking toward this milestone, I'm also deeply aware of the milestone of the U.S. presidential elections, as I'm sure you are. There's much to be concerned about regarding the state of our democracy. At the same time, I'm deeply inspired by all of the organizing right now in our movements, so full of determination, heart, and grit.

There are the folks working directly on the election. And there are also organizers all across the country working on democracy in other ways. From union organizers to our very own Corporate Accountability organizers. All of us advancing the concept and reality that it's people—not corporations or the mega-wealthy behind them—who should be the ones making decisions that affect our lives and our communities.

We need all of this organizing. We need everyone. People like you, who can see that a different kind of world is possible. And who are committed to doing the work to build toward that world—whether that's through financial support, making a phone call, or talking with neighbors and friends.

You have always been my inspiration in this work. Thank you for all the ways you help create a better world. I know that our shared vision and commitment will sustain us—right now and in the months and years to come.

Onward,

Patti Lynn
Executive Director

P.S. To learn more about this executive transition, visit: CorporateAccountability.org/BoardMessage

30 years of making Big Tobacco pay

Our decades of transformative impact together!

In 1993, Corporate Accountability established our campaign to Challenge Big Tobacco.

The following year, seven CEOs of the largest tobacco corporations stood before U.S. Congress and swore that they didn't believe nicotine was addictive. And all seven of them were lying.

In the three decades since, we and our allies have successfully exposed the tobacco industry's long trail of lies and deception. Together, we waged a historic campaign to secure the global tobacco treaty, which is instrumental in curbing the industry's abuses worldwide and the first corporate accountability treaty of its kind. And today, Big Tobacco can no longer operate with impunity.

"We and our allies are keeping a vigilant eye on Big Tobacco and making the industry pay for its abuses."

DANIEL DORADO | TOBACCO CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

Not only has our tobacco campaign set a road map for the larger corporate accountability movement, it has also proven that it is possible to kick corporations out and make them pay.

And as we celebrate the 30th anniversary of this precedent-setting campaign, we're feeling more energized than ever to keep challenging corporate abuse in all its forms. Thank you for all you make possible!

Read more!

Reflections on our latest tobacco campaign victory on our blog: CorporateAccountability.org/MBTPVictory

Q&A

Member spotlight: Joanna Oltman Smith

Joanna is a climate justice activist based in New York City with strong ties to Berkeley, California.

What brought you to Corporate Accountability?
I've known about the organization since I was a kid. My parents adopted my sister from Vietnam in the mid-'70s. When they learned about Nestle's infant formula marketing campaign in the Global South, they became enraged. This was how we got involved with Infact, and now Corporate Accountability's campaigns.

What about our campaigning resonates most with you now?
My parents were both smokers and died from tobacco-related cancers. I'm grateful for how Corporate Accountability has brought Big Tobacco to account. I'm also passionate about the climate campaign. It astounds me that so many lobbyists representing fossil fuel corporations have a seat at the policymaking table.

Regardless of the issue, your approach to campaigning is targeted and strategic. From the United Nations climate treaty talks to the global tobacco treaty negotiations, you have amazing access to critical policy spaces. You are on the inside, and you are getting a lot done there.

How do you see your role in the social justice movement?
It's important for me to challenge systems directly and be in the physical face of power. This practice comes from a Quaker tradition called "witness." There is power in being present where the harm is being done, and making sure the people doing the harm know that you are watching them.

What motivates you to keep going?
Doing this work makes me feel good as a person. I am always thinking about how I am one tiny being on this incredible, intricate planet. I need to use my body and my time to make sure that the people in power are listening to the people who are most impacted. Being rooted in these truths allows me to take action even when it feels really challenging.

Read more!

Extended interview on our website: CorporateAccountability.org/JoannaSpotlight

Making a new world possible

Advancing racial justice through the Black Collective

"Simply put: there is no end to corporate abuse without racial justice."

MED DIAGNE | MEMBERSHIP ORGANIZER AND BLACK COLLECTIVE TEAM MEMBER

Rows of well-kept garden beds brim with lettuce and carrots. Sage and parsley sprout up from a few well-loved clay pots. And amidst the rich tapestry of the liberation movement, a vibrant community of Black people gather to nurture the roots of change.

This is the imagery that came to mind for the Black Collective, a team of Black-identifying staff at Corporate Accountability, when creating the Black Collective framework, a living document that articulates the program's mission for the next several years.

We envision our work as a lively garden centered on a culture of care, collaboration, and community that acts as a powerful antidote to the poisonous cultures of white supremacy and racial capitalism.

And this framework beautifully lays out how we are advancing this work on many levels. From educating our community on the rich history of Black resistance to addressing police violence to supporting the reparations movement, we are excited to continue organizing throughout this next year and beyond. By tending to our garden together, we are planting the seeds for collective liberation and flourishing.

Thank you for supporting this transformative work!

Image by Paloma Rae, social justice artist and movement builder.

Explore the framework!

Download the PDF: CorporateAccountability.org/BlackCollectiveFramework

Joining forces with local leaders

Together, we expose false solutions across Latin America

We gathered with our allies after a panel discussion on the impact of corporate extractivism across Latin America. Photo credit: Nucleo de Investigacion NECOSOC de la UAHC, Chile

"We are creating structural change in the demand for climate justice—one rooted in anti-patriarchy, anti-capitalist, and anti-colonial values and visions."

NATHALIE RENGIFO ALVAREZ | LATIN AMERICA CLIMATE CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

This year, we continued building deep relationships with local communities through our Latin America climate team, which plays an important role within the region's climate justice movement.

Many communities in Latin America and the Caribbean face similar struggles: corporations that poison the land and water, while threatening activists with violence. So alongside our allies, we are building a powerful global movement to Make Big Polluters Pay by collaborating on projects that are helping to expose the corporate agenda across Latin America and the Caribbean.

This past April, we supported two regional coalitions in the launch of the Map of False Solutions to the Climate Crisis. With this map, our allies are revealing the truth behind false solutions that corporations are attempting to push in the Latin American region, such as "net zero" schemes and carbon capture and storage projects—while communities in Latin America are paying the cost for continued extractivism.

We also mobilized alongside Indigenous and Black allies in Santiago, Chile, during the Escazú Agreement negotiations. From protests to film screenings to attending the treaty meetings, we and our allies organized fiercely to ensure that the experiences and demands of frontline communities were reflected in the agreements.

By organizing in solidarity with a region that has been historically exploited by Big Polluters, we and our allies are advancing climate justice and the demand for real, just climate solutions together. And you have been an essential pillar of support to this work—thank you for all you make possible!

Watch the video!

Stories from our allies challenging Big Polluters in Latin America: CorporateAccountability.org/QuePaguenVideo

Stronger together

Sustain this work to protect human rights, people's lives, and the planet.

Contact Adjwoa Addae, senior membership manager: 617.695.2525.

Visit our website at CorporateAccountability.org/MonthlyGift

Send in the enclosed envelope.

Why monthly giving?

Your gift works more quickly and efficiently to make a bigger impact. You receive insider campaign updates to keep up to date on the influential role you have in creating a more just and equitable world. It's easy to participate, and you help save resources and expenses.

Thank you for your partnership!

"Donating monthly to Corporate Accountability is one small action I take toward building a more just world. The organization's persistence, focus on systemic change, and experience taking on powerful corporations is what we need to win."

KATE MCGRAIN | COMMUNITY BUILDER AND FACILITATOR FROM BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

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